DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 415 582 EA 028 863

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TITLE Ready, Set, Let's Go: An Evaluation Study of an Educational Administration Program for Beginning Administrators.
PUB DATE 1997-03-24
NOTE 13p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrators; *Educational Administration; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Management Development; Professional Continuing Education; Professional Development; Program Descriptions; Program Evaluation; *School Administration; Standards
IDENTIFIERS California Commission on Teacher Credentialing

ABSTRACT

After consulting more than 2,500 practicing administrators and other professionals, California's Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) adopted new standards for administrator preparation. The strengths and weaknesses of a new program that teaches these standards are discussed. The paper It focuses on the program in terms of its new features: induction, curriculum, mentoring, and candidate-assessment. The program was designed for the beginning administrator and uses the Standard of Quality and Effectiveness for Professional Administrative Services that was developed by the CTC. It consists of an induction course and three required core courses, electives, practicum, and a candidate assessment course. The curriculum is organized into five thematic areas: organizational and cultural environment, dynamics of strategic-issues management, ethical and reflective leadership, analysis and development of public policy, and management of information systems and human and fiscal resources. To evaluate the program, 25 beginning administrators who completed the pilot program were surveyed. Almost all candidates expressed satisfaction with the curriculum aspect of the program, agreeing that the curriculum themes were important components. The candidates' induction plans were well developed and the coursework allowed for meaningful integration of theory and practice. However, it seems that mentoring support from the candidates' school districts was inadequate. (RJM)

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Ready, Set, Let's Go: An Evaluation Study of an Educational Administration Program for Beginning Administrators

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the study is to assess strengths and weakenesses of an Educational Administration program specifically designed for the beginning administrators using the Standards of Quality and Effectiveness for Professional Administrative Services developed by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC). The results of the study will be used for the improvement in the preparation of school addministrators as well as in the support of beginning school administrators.

PERSPECTIVES

Like all other states, California requires educators to hold credentials granted by the state in order to serve in the public schools. The CTC is the agency of the California government that certifies the competence of all public school educators. Faced with the changing demands of school management and new expectations for school leadership, the CTC has adopted new standards for administrative preparation after conducting a comprehensive research over a two year period, consulting more than 2,500 practicing administrators, higher educators, school boards, teachers, parents, and the business community and extensively examining documents and other reform literatures.

The Commission decided to retain the two-level administrative credential structure--the Preliminary Administrative Services Credential and the Professional

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Administrative Services Credential--in its redesigned policies. The first tier was designed to provide preparation for entry into a first administrative position while the second tier included a plan for advanced preparation and targeted professional growth during the initial years of service (CTC, 1995). Under this two-tier system, administrative candidates receive a Preliminary Administrative Services Credential upon completion of the first-tier preparation. When an administrative position is obtained, the "time clock" starts for the completion of the Professional Administrative Services Credential requirements where the beginning administrator must obtain the second tier credential before the first tier credential expires.

In the Fall quarter of 1994, California State University, Los Angeles (CSULA) initiated a new exciting pilot program approved by California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) to reflect the new Standards of Quality and Effectiveness for Professional Administrative Services Credential Programs. The notable feature of the program is its design that supports and nurturs the beginning adminstrators during their first stage of practice in the real school settings, as if the training higher education institute walks alongside during the most critical career stage. This study examines the strengths and the weaknesses of the second-tier program in terms of its new features, namely induction, curriculum, mentoring, and candidate-assessment, using the CTC's standards.

The major thrust of the new professional level program is to provide a mechanism for the induction and professional development of the new

administrator. The emphasis of the professional level preparation is to move the administrator beyond the functional aspects of performing administrative service to reflective thinking about his or her role in providing an environment for effective and creative teaching, and student success in learning. Each candidate's plan for professional development at the professional level is guided by an individualized induction plan based on an assessment of the new administrator's needs. The plan includes a mentoring component, academic requirements, and "other" requirements which could include non-university activities (CTC, 1995).

The program consists of an induction course, and three required core courses, electives, practicum, and a candidate assessment course. The curriculum of the program is organized in the five thematic areas: Organizational and cultural environment; Dynamics of strategic issues management; Ethical and reflective leadership; Analysis and development of public policy; and Management of information systems and human and fiscal resources. The program was designed with consideration given to the new administrator's work responsibilities in planning the timing of coursework and professional development experiences. While the overall curriculum of the program extends from the learnings at the preliminary level, it allows for in-depth study of defined areas of interest for new administrators through elective courses which can be taken in other departments in the university.

METHODS

A candidate-survey form was developed to include questions on demographic backgrounds, induction, curriculum, and mentoring to identify the strengths and the weaknesses of the second-tier administrative program, borrowing the vocabularies from the CTC's Standards of Quality and Effectiveness for Professional Administrative Services Credential Program. Other than in the section on demographic backgrounds, a Likert scale of 1-5 was used for the responses to the questions. The survey also included open-ended questions for the beginning administrators to respond freely.

Frequencies were tabulated for each quantitative variable and content analyses were conducted for the qualitative responses.

Data Source

The CTC standards were obtained from the document published by the CTC, Standards of Quality and Effectiveness for Professional Administrative Services Credential Program. The 20 Standards of Quality and Effectiveness for Professional Administrative Services Credential Programs are listed in the Appendix. Twenty-five beginning administrators who have completed the pilot second-tier administrative program at CSULA were surveyed to provide their responses.

Result

Almost all of the students were novice administrators who had less than 3 years of administrative experience in large urban public schools with Preliminary Administrative Services Credentials.

In the first seminar course of the program, each candidate developed his/her own induction plan. Most of the students in the program felt that they were encouraged to assess their professional development needs, interests, job responsibilities, and career goals when the induction plan was designed. The induction plan was designed to meet the individual assessed needs of the beginning administrator and to include the individual performance goals with specific strategies and timelines outlined for achieving the goals (Standards 8). When developing the induction plan, candidates were provided with information about the program as well as advisement and assessment (Standards 9 & 10).

After completing the first year of the program, almost all candidates expressed satisfaction with the curriculum aspect of the program. Overall, the students agreed that the curriculum themes were incorporated into the program in ways that included systematic study, application of key concepts in the job setting and opportunities for personal reflection and integration of thematic study into a personal vision of administrative responsibilities (Curriculum Standard 12). The program also emphasized the importance of inquiry into these thematic areas as a part of all experiences in the program (Curriculum Standard 12). The coursework was geared to the needs of beginning administrators, extending from the preliminary level curriculum (Curriculum Standards 13). Most of all, the students appreciated the course content which challenged them, fostered critical reflection, and allowed for meaningful integration of theory and practice. The most emphatically praised feature of the program by the students appears to be the

flexible nature of the curriculum. By taking electives, candidates were able to select and pursue specific areas of interest within the curricular offerings. The curriculum of the program provided for specialization and individual development based on an assessment of the candidate's needs, interests, and career goals (Curriculum Standard 14).

Few candidates in the pilot program were satisfied with the mentoring component of the program. In fact, some of the candidates have not yet found their mentors at school sites. For most of the candidates, support and mentoring activities have been provided by the university faculty and by their colleagues. Few candidates responded positively about their districts' providing training to prepare mentors for their roles and responsibilities or about recognizing mentors in appropriate ways (Support and Mentoring Plan Standards 15 & 16).

A further analysis of the survey result indicates that students in the pilot program at CSLA have found a temporary substitute for the formal district administrative mentors--peer mentors. Almost all of the students responded very positively about the support received from other students in the program. The absence of the district administrator in the triad of the mentoring team resulted in an additional burden on the candidate in figuring out school operations alone without a mentor`s guide and on the university faculty in providing additional support and assistance to the candidate. Even though the faculty at CSLA did not specifically include peer coaching component in the program design, peer coaching has evolved among the participating students as they tried to fill the gap for

practicing administrative mentors. The program was structured including the very components recommended by Krovetz and Barekmen (1993), in their article, Peer coaching as the cornerstone of preparation for school administration credential, such as cohort grouping and seminar-format courses. The students at CSLA's pilot program were recruited into two separate cohort groups, taking same courses during the first year of the program. The faculty's instruction is delivered through open discussions among students where information sharing is strongly encouraged.

From the data gathered from the mid-program feedback results, CSLA has initiated a new requirement to the new cohort students to select their own mentors. While school districts all agree that mentoring concepts sound good and needed, without further incentives or mandates from the state, it seems that active mentoring support from the districts are not to be available in the near future. CSLA decided to rely on the human relationships among the administrators where beginning administratrators (the candidates) would select their own mentors from the school sites on a voluntary basis. This new mentoring is flexible in that our candidates may choose to select multiple mentors to meet their individual needs.

Throughout the program, the mentors are expected to provide mentoring supports that are indicated in the candidates' induction plans. The mentors are also invited to attend two campus class sessions with their mentees. At the end of the program, these mentors and university faculty supervisors will review the

candidates' portfolios and sign the exit interviews. The volunteer mentors will be recognized by CSLA with certificates of appreciation.

SUMMARY

As CTC has envisioned when developing new standards for the professional tier program, three entities---the candidate, the university, and the district---must work cooperatively in order to make the program successful. The result of the mid-program feedback indicates that the candidates' induction plans have been well developed and the coursework allowed for meaningful integration of theory and practice. A professional credential induction plan for the support and professional development of each candidate was designed at the beginning of the program. The content of the curriculum has a strong conceptual base and is organized to address principles of administrative practice in the thematic areas specified in by the curriculum content standard.

However, it seems that mentoring support from the districts was not provided adequately for the candidates. It is recommended that the districts take more assertive steps by developing appropriate criteria for mentor selection, assignment, responsibilities, training, and recognition. It seems that students have found a temporary substitute for the absence of district mentors through peers. The effectiveness of peer coaching versus mentoring is yet to be examined in the future. In order for the program to be truly effective as originally designed, district mentors must be provided at the very beginning of the program for candidates.

Since many districts do not seem to provide adequate district mentors for the beginning administrators, CSLA has initiated a volunteer mentoring selection strategy for the new cohort group. While this new requirement of finding own mentors seems to be a burden to the candidates, they may actually find mentors who would personally care for them and carefully guide them into the real world of administrators. The effectiveness of volunteer mentoring is yet to be discovered in the coming year.

EDUCATIONAL IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

This decade has been filled with many radical changes in education leadership. Such drastic changes, such as site-based management or technology in education, call for new framework for school administrators. Unfortunately, new leadership called for today's and tomorrow's school has no role models for prospective school administrators (Ubben & Hughes, 1992). With no such role models in schools, the only option for prospective school administrators will be to experiment what they need to learn while they are still in the preparation stage.

California has responded to the changing demands of school management and new expectations for school leadership by carefully developing comprehensive standards for the content and structure of preparation programs. CSLA's pioneering spirit has resulted in developing a new program that reflects these standards. The new CSULA's Preliminary Administrative Services Credential program is the first such program approved by the CTC. This study provides a

case study on how the conceptual rigorous standards can be materialized into a concrete preparation program for prospective school administrators.

References

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Appendix

Standards of Quality and Effectiveness for
Professional Administrative Services Credential Programs

Category I Institutional Resources and Coordination

Standard	1	Program Design, Rationale and Coordination
Standard	2	Institutional Attention to the Program
Standard	3	Resources Allocated to the Program
Standard	4	Qualifications of Faculty
Standard	5	Faculty Evaluation and Development
Standard	6	Program Evaluation and Development

Category II Admission and Candidate Services

Standard	7	Admission of Candidates
Standard	8	Design of the Professional Credential Induction Plan
Standard	9	Availability of Program Information
Standard	10	Candidate Advisement and Support
Standard	11	Candidate Assistance and Retention

Category III Curriculum

Standard	12	Curriculum Content
Standard	13	Scope and Delivery of the Professional Level Curriculum
Standard	14	Curricular Individualization

Category IV Support and Mentoring Plan

Standard	15	Provision of Mentoring Experiences
Standard	16	Mentor Qualifications

Category V Non-University Activities

Standard	17	Inclusion of Non-University Activities
Standard	18	Nature of Non-University Activities

Category VI Candidate Competence and Performance

Standard	19	Expectations for Candidate Performance
Standard	20	Assessment of Candidate Competence